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Kaiping Diaolou and the Chinese Diaspora Connection



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Chapter 1

The History of Kaiping Diaolou

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, *Kaiping* was a chaotic place that was frequently hit by peasant rebellions, wars and banditry. The Opium War from 1840 to 1842, Taiping Uprising from 1854 to 1856, the Red Scarf Uprising in 1854 and the constant armed conflicts among lineages and wars between warlords resulted in high death tolls and brought enormous disaster to the peasants (Batto, 2006; Tan, 2007).

Historically, Kaiping was marginal within the administrative system of *Guangdong* (广东). Before the Ming Dynasty, all the nearby counties such as *Enping* (恩平) and *Xinhui* (新会) did not have jurisdiction over *Kaiping*. The power vacuum made *Kaiping* an easy target of roaming bandits from the north (Zhang, 2011).

Social security had been a serious issue in *Kaiping*. It was until the Qing Dynasty that the government established formal jurisdiction in *Kaiping*. The name of *Kaiping* means “establish peace” where the local people had long for security in the region. However, up to the early twentieth century, *Kaiping* remained a chaotic place where the banditry remained rife and terrorized the local people living there. During that time, notorious bandit leaders such as *Zhao Shao*, *Zhu Bing*, *Hu Nan*, to name just a few, frequently raided villages, robbed, kidnapped or killed local residents. According to the records, from 1912 to 1930, 71 banditry cases occurred in *Kaiping* and killed around one hundred people. During that period, armed bandits broke into the county three times, captured the county head, plundered schools eight times and kidnapped teachers and students. Thousands of houses were burned into dust and hundreds of cattle were robbed (Zhang, 2011).

As a result of poverty, many villagers went to work in the railroad and gold mines in North America during the 19th century. By the early 20th century, *Kaiping* had become a famous *Qiaoxiang*. Returned migrants from North America brought back conspicuous wealth that caught the attention of bandits. It was thus not surprising that many migrants were kidnapped and robbed once they arrived at *Kaiping*. To fend off banditry and safeguard their wealth, fortified buildings, namely the diaolou were constructed. The majority of diaolou in the early 20th century were built with remittances from the emigrants. Influenced by the hybridized esthetics, diaolou incorporated certain western architectural elements in design. During the Mao's era in the 1960s and 1970s, seen as the embodiment of imperialist bourgeoisie lifestyle, a substantial number of diaolou were demolished. During *Deng Xiaoping's* rule, the number of diaolou further went down as some were pulled down to make a way for the economic development (Ho et al, 2006). Yet, some diaolou survived the changes and stood there to tell us the vicissitude of the history of *Kaiping*. The fusion of Chinese and western architectural styles, the embodiment of a specific culture and history, and their harmonious relationship with the surrounding natural environment distinguished them from other clusters of architectures in China. As such, in 2007, diaolou are recognized and listed by UNESCO as World Heritage.

Photo 1: Kaiping Diaolou-Ruishilou



Chapter 2

Geographical Location and Kaiping Diaolou Clusters

Kaiping is a city in the southwest region of *Guangdong* province. The transportation in pre-modern society relied heavily on the river. Connected by Tan River with *Jiangmen* and the broad Pearl Delta River, *Kaiping* was once the hub of transportation. Yet, when a web of roads and railways were fully established, *Kaiping* lost this transportation advantage. In the industrialized *Guangdong* province today, *Kaiping* is distinguished by its unique rural environment landscaped by lush greenery. Diaolou is situated in villages surrounding *Kaiping*. Most diaolou are scattered around in the fields and blended in with the village houses.

There are five large diaolou clusters in *Kaiping*. *Zilicun* cluster (自力村) is situated in *Tangkou* county (塘口镇) and composed of 15 diaolou, most of which were constructed during the 1920s and 1930s. Li Garden is also in *Tangkou* county. It is a villa complex built by the overseas Chinese family Xie. *Majianglong* cluster (马降龙碉楼群) is located in *Baihe* county (百合镇) and is composed of five villages (*Yongan* 永安; *Nanan* 南安; *Hedong* 河东; *Qinglin* 庆临 and *Longjiang* 龙江). *Jinjiangli* cluster (锦江里碉楼群) is in *Xiangang* county (蚬冈镇). *Ruishilou* (瑞石楼) is the most well-known diaolou in this cluster. It is a reinforced concrete building built by the Huang family in 1921. As high as nine storeys with a flamboyant exterior, it combined the architectural styles of ancient Greece, Roman and Byzantium, and is the landmark of this cluster. The interior is in traditional *Lingnan* style decorated with delicate woodcarvings. *Ruishilou* reflects the fusion of western and Chinese architectural styles and is advertised as one of the most beautiful diaolou in *Kaiping*. *Sanmenli* cluster (三门里村落) is situated in *Chikan* county (赤坎镇). Other famous

diaolou in *Kaiping* includes *Fangshi* watchtower (方氏灯楼) in *Tangkou* county and *Yanpinglou* in *Baihe* county. *Sanmenli*, *Zilicun*, *Majianglong* and *Jinjiangli* clusters, together with *Fangshi* watchtower were listed by UNESCO as World Heritage in 2007.

Map 1: The Layout of Diaolou Cluster in Kaiping

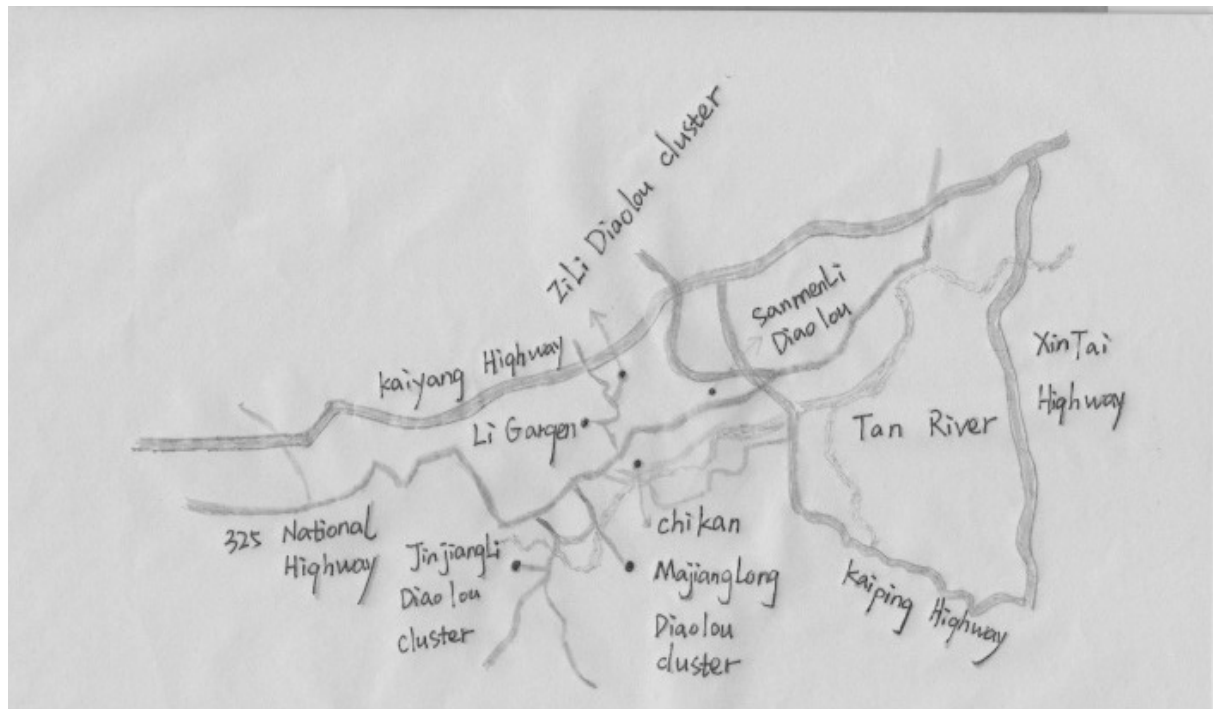


Photo 2: *Zilicun* Diaolou Cluster



Photo 3: *Majianglong* Diaolou Cluster



Photo 4: *Jinjiangli* Diaolou Cluster



Photo 5: *Chikan* County



Photo 6: One Villa in Li Garden



Chapter 3

The Architecture Style and Category of Diaolou

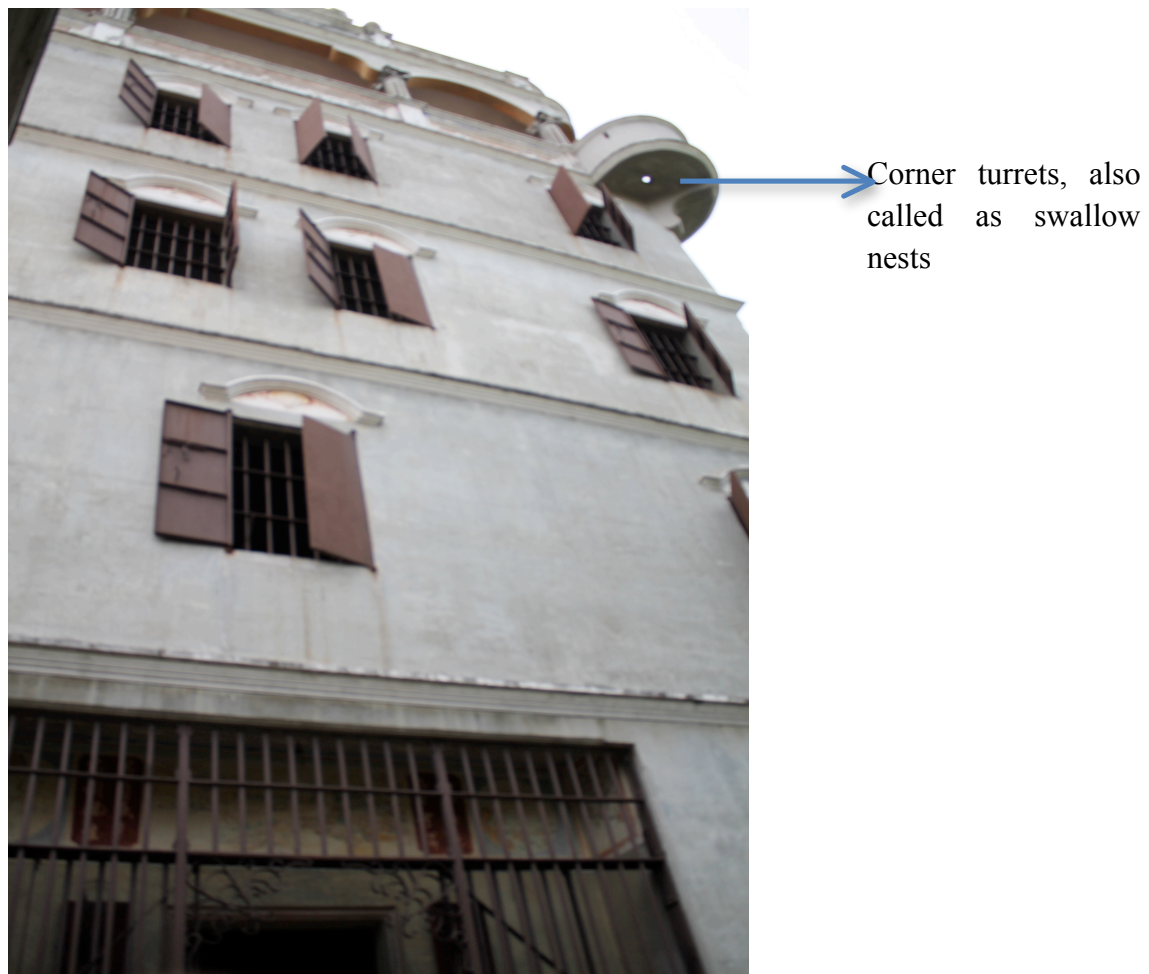
Kaiping Diaolou is multi-storey village fortress, built of stone, rammed earth, brick or reinforced concrete and once functioned as a fortress. They featured bolted steel doors and windows, “overhanging fighting platforms, the crenellations on the parapet walls and most of all, the projecting corner turrets” (Ho et al, 2006:1215). Initially, stone and rammed earth were frequently used in diaolou construction. Later when cement and steel could be imported, reinforced concrete was used to build diaolou. Despite for the concern of the economy, some families still chose rammed earth and stone (Batto, 2006). In *Kaiping*, 1474 diaolou are made of reinforced concrete, 249 are brick dialou, and 100 are made of rammed earth and 10 are stone diaolou.¹

Photo 7: Iron Windows and Entrance



¹<http://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/开平楼> retrieved on July 4, 2012

Photo 8: Corner Turrets



As can be seen in the above photos, the exterior of lower storey is plain, while that of higher storey are flamboyant with the decoration of Athens columns, Roman vault or delicate stone carvings that feature western architectures. According to Zhang, such architectural style was chosen because as a fortress the structure of lower storey should be extremely strong to withstand the attack of banditry. Hence, they are simple and plain, but as the façade of higher storey is most visible from afar, it was heavily decorated to display the wealth and prestige of the diaolou owners (Ho et al, 2006; Zhang 2011). Diaolou built in 1920s and 1930s represented the most flamboyant ornamentation.

The specific architectural style of diaolou reflects a fusion of Chinese and

western cultures. Emigrated Chinese brought western architectural styles to *Kaiping*, but this was not guided by any conscious aesthetic reflections but a simplistic combination of different styles. In one explanation, diaolou's western features inherited the Anglo-India architectural style that once dominated the colonial Hong Kong. Ho argues that in the old time when returned overseas Chinese travelled long distance from America and Canada, they would disembark when arrived at Hong Kong's Victoria Harbour. They stayed there for several days to relax and shop around before booking tickets for the last leg of journey to *Kaiping*. In Hong Kong, they were probably impressed by the magnificent buildings of Anglo-India architectural style, a particular style that the British were fascinated with during that period. They thus might bring photo postcards of these buildings to *Kaiping* and hired masons to build their diaolou based on these photo postcards (Ho et al, 2006).

Photo 9: Western Style Pavilion and Column on top of the Diaolou



Photo 10: Columns with Intricate Designs



There is a lack of records on the designers of diaolou, but based on the remaining blueprints and technical drawings, Zhang argues that there could be three categories of designers. The first category comprised foreign designers. Emigrated Chinese invited foreign architects to draw blueprints and sent them back to their family in *Kaiping*, who employed masons to build diaolou based on the drawings. For example, the existing record shows that *Shengfenglou* (升峰楼) was designed by a French architect. The second were the local architects. They were architects in *Kaiping* or in *Guangzhou*, but were professionals different from the third category. *Yanpinglou* (雁平楼) was designed by a local architect. The third type were local stonemasons who did not achieve any credential, but had received training in the traditional system of apprenticeship. Craftsmen did not run their own company, nor did they form fixed construction team. Instead, they travelled around villages to take up construction projects (Zhang, 2011).

Diaolou could be categorized into three types based on their different functions. The first type is communal building (众人楼). As the name reveals, this type of diaolou was built by a whole village and was a property of the village. During the 19th and early 20th Century, it was mainly used as a temporary refuge for villagers. When bandits raided the village, alarm would be alerted to urge villagers to the communal buildings for protection. During safe time, communal buildings were closed off. As a refuge, communal diaolou is simple in design and plain in exterior and interior decoration. *Jinjianglou* (锦江楼) is a typical communal diaolou.

Photo 11: Communal Building *Jinjianglou*



The second type is a residential building (居楼). It was built by individual families and used for both residential and defensive purposes. Some Chinese migrants accumulated conspicuous wealth overseas. When returned home, they built a comfortable, safe but ornate living house to fend off bandits and displayed their success and wealth. Thus, such type of diaolou is most flamboyant in its interior and exterior decoration. In these residential buildings, the lower storeys were used for daily life, while the highest floor was reserved for the spirits of their ancestors and decorated as the ancestral hall.

Photos 12: The Interior Decoration of a Residential Building in Li Garden



Photo 13: Dining room



Photo 14: Kitchen



Photo 15: Bedroom



The third type is watchtower that was used to provide a safe, high place for guards to observe surrounding areas.

Among the remaining diaolou in *Kaiping* today, 473 are communal buildings, 1149 are residential buildings and 221 are watchtowers (Zhang, 2011).

Chapter 4

The Lineage System in Kaiping

Before the People's Republic of China was founded, lineage was the basic social structure in *Kaiping*. Most lineages were territorially-based kinship groups where people from one or several villages were descendants of common ancestors. Big lineages in *Kaiping* included Guan, Situ, Xie, Huang and others. Lineages were hierarchically related to each other in which some lineages such as Guan were so dominant that minor lineages might serve them in semi-feudal ways (Woon, 1989). Powerful lineages competed for land, resources, influence and dominance. The feuds and competitions between the two most powerful lineages, Guan and Situ, ran through the early history of *Chikan* and divided *Chikan* into Upper and Lower parts along the *Tangdi* street. The land and the majority of shops in the Upper *Chikan* belonged to the Guan lineage while the Situ lineage owned and controlled the lower *Chikan*. Members of two lineages seldom frequented shops across the street. The two library buildings in *Chikan* testified to the competition of the two lineages for status and influence. In 1925, Situ built a splendid library, which shocked the Guan lineage, who soon made a decision to build another library. A flamboyant building with the similar scale was finished construction in 1929.

There was a hierarchical structure in the dominant or big lineage such as Guan, which was embodied in the differentiation of family segments (or *fangs*) and different positions that their individual ancestral halls occupied. At the top level of the building was the *Guang Yu* ancestral hall in *Chikan* County. Below that were four halls representing four segments of Guan lineage: *Lingyuan* hall, *Wurong* hall, *Zhongmiao* hall and *Luyang* hall. At the lower structure were a number of ancestral halls representing lower level lineage segments (*fang*) in the 40 natural villages. Within a lineage, competition among different segments and *fangs* existed, but the common ancestry and ritual ceremony contributed to uniting them into one kinship group.

Lineage also possessed common land, and thus, it was also an economic entity that unified segments and *fangs* by common economic interests (Woon, 1989).

Before 1949, lineage segments were the basis of official administrative units. In 1930, the four segments of Guan lineage formed four *xiang* (county) in *Kaiping*, namely, *Lingyuan xiang*, *Wurong xiang*, *Zhongmiao xiang* and *Luyang xiang* (Woon, 1989).

After 1949, aiming to remold the rural community structure, the CCP had fundamentally weakened the power of the lineage. Promoting class struggle, socialism and collectivization, the CCP could not tolerate any kinship structure that obstructed class loyalty. “Clans, and more importantly, large localized and non-localized lineages, with their hierarchical system of ancestral halls, their own sets of rules, regulations and rituals, their extensive corporate property, their control over market towns and irrigation channels, and their dominance over other minor lineages, were clearly a political and economic threat to the regime” (Woon, 1989:331). To weaken the power of lineage, the local government changed the boundary of lineage-based administrative units and reshaped the residential pattern by mixing people from multiple lineages. To crack down the ancestor worship, the government confiscated and redistributed the property of ancestral halls and eliminated ancestors’ tablets. Traditional rites that functioned to unify the whole lineage were attacked as the residue of feudalism and discontinued. To cut cross lineage royalties, the government carried out class struggles. These policies and campaigns had undermined the economic and social ties of lineages (Woon, 1989). As a consequence, lineages in *Kaiping* could not prosper during the period of 1949-1978.

After 1978, the government shifted its focus from class struggle to economic modernization, and it gradually adopted more liberal economic, social and cultural policies and became increasingly tolerant of religious and cultural activities. Concomitant with this change was the shifting of official attitudes towards overseas Chinese who were no longer seen as suspicious betrayers but resourceful compatriots.

To attract their investment on the local economy, the government compromised with overseas Chinese on religious and cultural issues. The wealth of overseas Chinese provided them with certain bargaining power with the local government in a changed context. As a result, Woon discovered that after 1978, Guan lineage in *Chikan* have partially rebuilt the lineage institution by reviving rituals and religious practices that were banned in the Maoist era. They also managed to establish Guan lineage schools, rebuilt libraries and enhanced economic ties of the lineage. Overseas Chinese with their enormous wealth and influence played a critical role in the revival of lineage. It is the overseas Chinese who persuaded the local government to restore the joint cemetery, revived traditional rituals such as *Kaideng* (开灯) ceremony and published lineage journals. Despite facing constraints from the government, these cultural activities helped to rebuild the lineage system and promoted the lineage identity (Woon, 1989). *Situ* lineage in the lower *Chikan* has restored their lineage library while the Huang lineage has revived the traditional lineage ritual. The following photo showed that in 2002, Huang lineage made a public announcement to raise money from lineage members to renovate their *Dengliao* (灯寮).

Photo 16: Raising Money for *Dengliao* Renovation



All in all, after 1978 in a more liberal economic and social context, the lineages in *Kaiping* have prospered though they did not manage to achieve the once dominant position.

Chapter 5

Religion and Ancestor Worship in Kaiping

The traditional folk religious system in *Kaiping* was characterized by multi-deities worship, in which ancestor worship took the central important position. No matter rich or poor, every family set up an ancestral shrine in the hall. In diaolou, ancestral hall was usually arranged on the highest floor. Ancestral shrine in some affluent families were delicately decorated with gilded woodcarvings of dragon and phoenix. A worship table was placed in the middle of the hall holding an incense burner, flowers and other offering. In the centre of shrine were the ancestral tablets and photos of the ancestors. Usually, tablets of early ancestors were placed in the middle, while those of the wife, father, grandfather and great grandfather were arranged on both sides. Traditionally, concubine's tablets were not allowed in the shrine. On both sides of the wooden frame hang couplets bearing ancestors' blessing. Commonly worshipped deities such as *guanyin* (观音) may also be put in the shrine and receive people's worship (Mei, 2007).

Photo 17: Ancestral Halls in Diaolou



Photo 18: Ancestral Shrine



Ancestor worship, called as *baibogong* (拜伯公) in *Kaiping*, was practiced on all important festivals such as the lunar new year, lantern festival and so on. On special occasions such as wedding ceremony or funeral, ancestors were also worshiped to ask for their blessing. Besides family worship, lineages organized large-scale communal worship periodically. A grand and impressive communal worship displayed wealth, solidarity and influence of a lineage. Thus, traditionally ancestor worship was one of the most significant religious practices in *Kaiping* (Mei, 2007).

Traditionally, *Kaiping* people also routinely worshipped other deities including Heavenly Official (*Tianguan* 天官), Earth God (*Dishen* 地神), Door Official (*Menguan* 门官), Stove God (*Zaoshen* 灶神), Door God (*Menshen* 门神) and River God (*Heshen* 河神). *Tianguan* is from heaven and is in charge of weather and harvest. His tablet may be hung in the wall of courtyard facing the central hall. *Dishen* is also called as *Tudigong* who is a deity from soil and is commonly worshiped by Han

people in China. *Tudi* is believed to have the power of pooling wealth. His shrine is usually buried under the floor in the centre of the main hall, but may also be put in the corner. *Menguan* hangs on the wall of the corridor. People worship him for blessing offspring and getting rid of poverty. *Zaoshen*, also called as *Zaowangye*, is in charge of food and kitchen, and thus was once of critical importance to local people. His shrine is commonly arranged in the kitchen above the stove. *Menshen* is the guardian of house and his tablets usually hang above the main entrance. As *Kaiping* is located in the confluence of rivers, river god, *Heshen*, is also worshipped. *Heshen's* shrine is usually situated by riverside. In ancestor worship, as a routine practice, these deities are all worshipped to ask for their blessings (Mei, 2007). Thus, multi-deities worship is an important feature of folk religion in *Kaiping*.

Photo 19: Tablets of Local Deities (in front of the building)



Photo 20: Earth God Located at the Corner of the Building



As a *Qiaoxiang*, Western influence has permeated into the folk religion. Traditionally, the image of clock could never appear in ancestors' or deities' shrines as in Mandarin, the pronunciation of clock (*zhong* 钟) is identical to that of death. But Mei finds that in *Baihezhen*, the image of clock was inscribed in one family's *Menshen* shrine, which according to the owner represented the family's respect for modern advanced technology. Family Lin painted a flying eagle and snake in the ancestral shrine of *Linlu* (林庐) in *Majianglong* village. Flying eagle and snake are images in Mexico national emblem, which were chosen to commemorate the family's migration experience in Mexico (Mei, 2007).

Associated with the folk religion are various local rituals. *Kaideng* ceremony is one of them. It has a long history and was once a lineage-based ritual. In *Kaiping*, each *fang* in a lineage built a *dengliao* (lantern hut). During the New Year festival, a family would hang a lantern in *dengliao* to announce the arrival of a male descendant. In *Kaideng* ceremony, villagers formed a religious procession to fetch *guangyin* and *guangong* from nearby temples to their *dengliao* for worshipping.

Photo 21: Inside the *Dengliao*



Photo 22: Exterior of *Dengliao*



Photo 23: List of Donors to *Dengliao* Renovation



Apart from the aforementioned folk religion, Buddhism, Daoism and Christianity all have a place in the *Kaiping's* religious system. Buddhism was introduced to *Kaiping* during the Song Dynasty and before 1949 around 20 Buddhist temples had been built in *Kaiping*. Daoism long had a position in *Kaiping's* religious practice. On various occasions such as house construction or funeral, Daoist priests were invited to recite sutra and performed rituals. Christianity and Catholicism influenced *Kaiping* since the *Guangxu* era (光绪) of the Qing Dynasty. By the end of 1909, it had around 2,400 followers and 14 Catholic churches were built in *Kaiping*. Folk religion, Buddhism, Daoism, Christianity and Catholicism formed the religious system in *Kaiping* (Mei, 2007).

After the CCP took over China, religious activities such as ancestor worship were all categorized as superstition and attacked as the residue of feudalism. As such, the local government prohibited villagers to worship ancestors and other local deities. To break the expansion of lineage dominance, the local government banned the

lineage-based rituals such as *kaideng* ceremony. The lantern huts were either demolished or converted into study places for learning Mao's guiding principles (Woon, 1989). As a result, religious activities came to a halt during that period.

Since the 1980s, religious revivalism has taken place in *Kaiping* when the local government adopted more liberal social and cultural policies. In the early 1980s, overseas Chinese began to press the local government to revive traditional religious rituals such as the *kaideng* ceremony. They donated money to rebuild the demolished lantern huts. Yet, in the 1980s, the local government remained highly suspicious of such activities and was worried about the expansion of lineage power and possible political consequences associated with the rise of the lineage. Thus, although overseas Chinese were permitted to hold *kaideng* ceremony, the local government regulated the scale, form and organization of the ceremony. In Guan lineage villages, the authority only allowed the rebuilding of one *dengliao* in one parent village and required non-Guan members to attend the *kaideng* ceremony to counteract against the rising influence of the lineage. In addition, defining it as a superstition, they did not allow villagers to form a procession to fetch *guanyin* and *guangong* to their own *dengliao*. Villagers then set the images of these deities permanently in the shrine of their *dengliao*. Thus, Woon argued that due to the strict government control, the revived *kaideng* ceremony was no longer a lineage based ritual but a territorially based ceremony (Woon, 1989).

There was also a revival in ancestor worship. Entering into the 20th century, reassured by the central government's firm stand to develop the market economy, the local government permitted the organizing of folk religious activities as a strategy to encourage overseas Chinese to return and help with village redevelopment. Ancestor worship was seen as a form of cultural capital that could be turned into economic capitals for village development. It thus lifted the ban on ancestor worship. To encourage overseas Chinese investment, local officials often attended such ceremony and gave speeches on the achievement of overseas Chinese. In 2011, during the

Chongyang festival, Zhou lineage held a grand ceremony of ancestor worship in *Kaiping*, which was organized by Hong Kong Zhoulianxi Lineage Association and attended by local officials. The association invited Zhou lineage members from Mexico, the United States, Australia, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan as well as Zhou descendants in *Zhongshan*, *Shunde*, *Guangdong* province. A total of more than two hundred people attended the great ceremony held in front of Zhou lineage hall in *Baihe zhen*, *Kaiping*. The Mayor of *Kaiping*, the leader of *Baihe zhen*, and the chairman of lineage association all gave speeches in the opening ceremony. Members of Zhou lineage bowed and worshiped *Zhouliangong* (周廉公) in groups. Crackers were fired, lion dance was performed to enliven the atmosphere. As part of the ritual, the Zhou descendants collectively offered roasted pigs to ancestors. After the worship, *taigong* (太公 a elderly man in the lineage) cut and distributed them to lineage members. All lineage segments took group photos in front of the ancestral hall. A grand banquet was held in the evening, during which Hong Kong Zhou Lineage Association presented scholarship to six lineage segments, each with 10,000 Hong Kong dollar, and offered 12,000 Hong Kong dollars to lineage journals.

2

In 2012, during the Spring festival, Fang lineage held a communal ancestor worship. More than three hundred lineage members in *Shaxi zhen* went to *Kaiping* to worship their common ancestor *Fangdaosheng* (方道盛). Fang lineage members from three villages attended the ceremony. The lineage leader, known as uncle mian (棉叔) was responsible for organizing the ritual. Uncle mian took this position in 1998. Previously only elderly men were entitled to attend the ritual, but with the shrinking of patriarchal power, young people and women are now allowed to attend it. Uncle mian expressed that through ancestor worship, he hoped lineage members could remember their root and their ancestors. *Kaiping* is the origin of Fang lineage in *Guangdong*. As a tradition, a grand ancestor worship involving all of the Fang

²<http://tieba.baidu.com/p/1234747905?pn=2> retrieved on July 5, 2012

segments was held every ten year in *Kaiping* on *Qingming* festival.³

³<http://www.fangshiwang.com/thread-12667-1-1.html> retrieved on July 5, 2012

Chapter 6

Chinese Overseas and Their Hometown: Migration and Transnational Connection

It is estimated that around 50 to 60 percent of people in *Kaiping* were overseas Chinese dependents (*Qiaojuan* 侨眷). Emigration was once impossible because of cultural, political and economic factors impeding people's mobility. Culturally, the long-entrenched norm of filial piety attached people to their parents to fulfill their duty; politically the state contained people in counties and villages to prevent social disorder and chaos; economically when agriculture was the main economic activity, people had developed an emotional tie with the soil (Ho et al, 2006). Emigration was possible after a series of profound social, economic and political transformations. In *Kaiping*, the overseas emigration started in the late 19th century, a time that *Kaiping* was constantly hit by civil wars, famines and feud and conflicts between lineages. Overpopulation and the poor local economy also drove people out for survival. Imperialist intrusion forced the Qing dynasty to sign the open door treaty, which facilitated the international migration by opening China's labour market. In 1842, the Qing Dynasty signed the Nanjing Treaty, which permitted the western countries to recruit labourers in China. At the same time, the failure of the Red Scarf uprising left participating peasants in panic, as they were afraid of persecution from the regime, many thus chose to flee overseas. The ten year fighting between Hakka and indigenous people in *Guangdong* led to forced emigration as they captured each other and traded them to Macao as *zhuzai* (猪仔), who were then shipped overseas as coolies (Tan, 2007).

In the early 1840s, western colonizers speeded up the exploitation of Southeast countries and needed a large number of labourers for mining, planting and building

public facilities. Later, gold deposits were discovered in the west of America, Canada and Australia, which entailed the importation of labourers. In the 1860s, America and Canada began to construct the cross-border railroad. These construction projects also needed substantial cheap labourers. It was under such push and pull conditions that peasants in *Kaiping* left their hometown and migrated to the far-away countries either voluntarily or by force (Tan, 2007).

According to Tan, most of the early emigrants were *zhuzai*, who were kidnapped to Macao and then shipped overseas. They were forced to sign a five to eight years contract, during which time they did not have personal freedom and were severely exploited by employers as slaves. Credit labour system appeared later. As many of these emigrants were bankrupted peasants who could not afford travel expenses, they signed a contract with the employers to obtain a sum of money in advance to pay for ticket, food and accommodation (Tan, 2007). It was after paying off the debt that they were free to seek employment by themselves.

At that time, the dream of these coolies was to earn enough money, return home, marry a wife and build a large house (Ho et al, 2006). Despite of needing their labours, receiving countries did not accept them as permanent settlers. The notorious Chinese Immigration Acts passed in 1882 precluded the family re-unification of Chinese in the United States. These emigrated labourers worked long hours, lived a spartan and lonely life in Chinatowns and dreamed about a happy and comfortable life after returning to *Kaiping*. They thus contributed generously to the diaolou construction as it was considered as their permanent home. Diaolou embodied migrants' nostalgic feelings towards *Kaiping*.

In the existing 1833 diaolou, the majority of them were constructed in the early 20th century by using money from emigrants. As early as the Ming Dynasty, diaolou was built, yet by the Opium War, *Kaiping* built only a few diaolou. It was until the early 20th century that *Kaiping* began to construct a large number of diaolou. From

1900 to 1931, a total of 1648 diaolou were built in *Kaiping*, accounting for 89.9 percent. In the decade from 1921 to 1931, 940 diaolou were built.⁴

In the 1940s, with the ease of immigration control in Canada and America, Chinese emigrants gradually settled down and brought their family with them. Many of them accumulated wealth by running small business. Their children received English education and successfully climbed up the social ladder to become the social elites in the receiving countries. They started to identify with these countries. As such their interests in building diaolou gradually faded away. According to the record, from 1943 to 1949, *Kaiping* only built seven diaolou. The last diaolou *Jianlu* (健庐) was built in 1949 in *Xintang* village, *Chikan* county.⁵

Photo 24: Exhibition of Emigration History and Diaolou in the Museum of Li Garden



⁴<http://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/开平碉楼> retrieved on July 4, 2012

⁵<http://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/开平碉楼> retrieved on July 4, 2012

Photo 25: Chinese Overseas Museum Displays



However, these early emigrants continued to be concerned with China's destiny and were highly involved in the revolutions taking place in the 20th century. According to the record, *Situmeitang* (司徒美堂) in America supported *Sun Zhongshan* with 150,000 US dollars to carry out revolutionary activities. Among the 72 martyrs in *Huanghuagang* uprising (黄花岗起义), two were overseas Chinese from *Kaiping*. During the anti-Japanese war, *Situmeitang* set up a patriotic organization "New York Overseas Chinese Fundraising Association for Resisting Japan and Save the Nation" (纽约华侨抗日救国筹款总会). This association raised more than 14 million US dollars from Chinese in New York to support China's national war against Japan.⁶

In various ways, overseas Chinese had supported *Kaiping's* development. Existing records showed that in 1934, overseas Chinese in America and Canada raised \$160,000 to construct a steel bridge to connect *Xiangang* and *Baihe*; *Tan Daoxing*

⁶<http://wqj.kaiping.gov.cn/news/view.asp?id=254> retrieved on July 4, 2012

founded a clinic in *Shishanyu* (矢山圩); in *Xiangang*, overseas Chinese Zhou proposed and helped establish Zhou lineage library. *Chikan* could not have been so prosperous without the generous support of overseas Chinese. Remittances raised *Kaiping* people's quality of life and helped to develop *Kaiping* as a market town. Overseas Chinese were also enthusiastic to build schools and libraries to eliminate illiteracy and educate the young generations. The first publication in *Kaiping* was issued with the support of overseas Chinese as well. *Deng Yiyun* found Kaiping Newspaper in 1914.⁷

Photo 26: Guan Lineage Library Built by Remittance from Overseas Chinese



⁷<http://wqj.kaiping.gov.cn/index1.asp> retrieved on July 6, 2012

During 1949-1978, the government's constraining policies weakened overseas Chinese' connection with *Kaiping*. After 1978 when the government has changed its attitudes towards overseas Chinese, categorized them as compatriots and encouraged them to invest in China, overseas Chinese began to visit *Kaiping* and started the journey of searching roots (寻根之旅) in the 1980s. The official website of Foreign Affairs and Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of Kaiping City (开平侨网) reported 51 news regarding such journey from 2007 to 2012. These overseas Chinese were high rank officials, entrepreneurs, scientists or lawyers from America, Canada, New Zealand, Macao, Singapore and Indonesia and so on. *Kaiping* government sent officials to escort them in their journey and permitted them to renovate ancestral cemeteries and ancestral halls.

Overseas Chinese, many of whom were elderly people, brought their children and grandchildren to *Kaiping* to visit the ancestral home. The ideas of “drinking water while thinking about the source (引水思源) and “the leaves return to the roots”(落叶归根) shaped elderly overseas Chinese' feeling towards *Kaiping*. They perceived *Kaiping* as their ancestral home and the source of identity and were eager to pass on such sentiments to the young generations. The young generations did have certain interests in their ancestors' home. In 2007, more than twenty young Chinese from Indonesia participated in the searching roots journey organized by Indonesia Guangzhao Association. Four of them found their ancestral home with the help of Kaiping Oversea Chinese Affair Office.⁸ In 2011, a group of eight young people attended the winter camp to search roots in *Kaiping*.⁹ In 2012, organized by Chinese History Association in America, 13 young Chinese American visited *Kaiping* to search their cultural roots. The organizer *Ouyang Ruzhan* expressed that through such journey, they hoped the young generations could develop deep understanding on their

⁸<http://wqj.kaiping.gov.cn/news/view.asp?id=647> Retrieved on July 6, 2012

⁹<http://wqj.kaiping.gov.cn/news/view.asp?id=1607> Retrieved on July 6, 2012

ancestors' home, history and culture of their hometown, enhance their ties with *Kaiping*, elevate the young generations' ethnic pride, strengthen their cultural roots and sense of belonging, reinforce their consciousness on "roots" and so on.¹⁰

¹⁰<http://wqj.kaiping.gov.cn/news/view.asp?id=1679> retrieved on July6, 2012

Chapter 7

Kaiping Diaolou as World Cultural Heritage

In 2007, Kaiping Diaolou was listed by UNESCO as World Heritage because of its architectural uniqueness, its harmony with the surrounding agricultural landscape and its transnational diaspora history. The long process of application started in 2001, marked by the establishment of Kaiping Application Office. In the same year, Kaiping Diaolou obtained the status of national cultural heritage site, which was a necessary step to apply for world heritage on behalf of China.

The local government organized surveys and set up a database on diaolou. The administrative office of the local government initiated survey and research on Kaiping Diaolou. The first survey was carried out in 2001. From 2003 to 2004, the administrative office, together with doctoral students from Tokyo University and Peking University conducted the second survey. In 2005, they carried out an oral history study to collect stories and memories on Kaiping Diaolou from local villagers. Published and unpublished documents together with the survey data contributed to building up an archive on Kaiping Diaolou, detailing the lifestyles and histories associated with it. The local government office also managed a digital archive (Tan, 2007).

In 2000, Kaiping Diaolou was rated as city-level cultural relics and some of them were converted into national museums. Since then, diaolou has been protected by the Protection of Cultural Relics Law in China. In 2001, the *Guangdong* government issued the Guangdong Regulations on the Conservation and Management of Kaiping Diaolou while in 2002 the *Kaiping* government implemented the Regulations on the

Conservation and Management of Kaiping Diaolou.¹¹ These laws and regulations are the legal basis of conservation and preservation of Kaiping Diaolou (Tan, 2007).

To ensure the enforcement of these regulations in daily life, the local authority established a customary law at the level of village, modeled after the above regulations. This customary law guided local residents' daily use of *diaolou* and became an integral part of the legal system of *diaolou* preservation.

Governments at various levels played different roles in the conservation of *diaolou*. The Conservation and Management Office of Kaiping Diaolou and Villages was directly responsible for *diaolou*'s routine management and conservation. Many existing *diaolou* are now vacant buildings as their owners have moved overseas. Under the government's persuasion, some families have entrusted *diaolou* to the People's Government of Kaiping. In 2001, *Fangshi* watchtower (方氏灯楼), *Anlu* in *Zilicun* 自力村安庐), *Zhulinlou* (竹林楼), *Yinonglu* (逸农庐), *Juanlou* (居安楼)、*Longshenglou* (龙胜楼), *Zhenanlou* (振安楼), *Yangguang* villa (耀光别墅) and others were entrusted to the local government. By 2012, a total of 37 *diaolou* had been entrusted to the *Kaiping* government. The use of *diaolou* by their owners should abide by the relevant regulations on cultural relics. In each of the four main *diaolou* clusters, a management office was established to take in charge of conservation (Tan, 2007). Based on these laws, regulations and standards of UNESCO, a comprehensive system of conservation was established. Special protection was given to *diaolou*, ancestral halls and those houses built before the Republican period. In the core zone, conservation also extended to protect the integrity of village layout and vegetation landscape. New buildings were not allowed to build in the core zone. In the buffer zone, the natural and historical setting was to be preserved and industrial establishments that obstructed the *diaolou* landscape in the core zone were demolished (Tan, 2007).

¹¹Both regulations were revised in 2006.

Photo 27: A Renovated Building in Contrast to an Old House



Photo 28: The Core Zone of Diaolou Cluster



Based on this principle, new buildings that threatened the integrity of diaolou landscape were pulled down. The cement factory in the north of *Majinglong* village was relocated. Incongruous buildings were renovated to fit into the diaolou landscape. In *Majianglong* cluster, two modern style buildings were renovated to resemble the old diaolou. Tiles were replaced by grey bricks and the top of roof was redesigned with reference to the style of diaolou. The local government remade the setting of courtyard in *Zilicun* by paving the road with local chiseled stones, planting grass, covering the courtyard with native plants such as hawthorn, yellow mint so as to construct a rustic yet neat landscape in *Zilicun* (Tan, 2007).

The preservation and conservation funds came from donations, ticket revenue and government input. Before 2000, the diaolou maintenance funds came primarily from diaolou owners. After 2000, despite entrusting diaolou to *Kaiping* government, overseas Chinese continued to contribute to the conservation of diaolou and donated money generously. *Huang Dequan* (黄德全), a Canadian Chinese, donated one million RMB to set up “Kaiping Diaolou and Village Special Fund”.¹²

The second source of fund came from ticket revenue. By 2012, Li Garden, *Zilicun*, *Majinglong*, *Jinjiangli* village were opened to tourists. The price of a pass ticket is 180 RMB. Thirty percent of ticket revenue was reserved for the conservation. The government’s input constituted the third source of fund. From 2001 to 2010, the *Kaiping* government invested about 70 million RMB on the diaolou preservation (Tan, 2007).

According to the local authority, there is still lack of fund in the diaolou conservation. Only 37 diaolou were entrusted to the local government and received proper maintenance, while more than one thousand diaolou scattered in the fields surrounding *Kaiping* without maintenance. The government estimated a shortfall of around 23 million RMB. To raise money from the community, in 2011, the government adopted a new strategy and encouraged adoption of diaolou. Enterprises,

¹²<http://www.chinadiaolou.com/index.asp> retrieve on July 9,2012

organizations, individuals and overseas Chinese could adopt a diaolou if they donate 100,000 to 300,000 RMB to the diaolou fund set up in the Kaiping Finance Bureau for the conservation of diaolou. Adopted diaolou may be used for business purposes but such uses should not violate the relevant regulations on cultural relics. In 2011, a total of 20 diaolou were adopted.¹³

The conservation was not limited to buildings or natural landscape, but extended to intangible cultural heritage including local lifestyle, traditions and customs. The local authority also intended to protect the rustic lifestyle of villagers and safeguard their sense of belonging and identity. It advocated respecting local lifestyles, preserving, encouraging and guiding villagers to maintain the farming, fishing culture and *Qiaoxing* lifestyle, preserving folk customs, operatic song and so on.¹⁴ In line with this, a long term plan was drawn up to preserve traditional cooking, local performing arts, technics, skills, folk worship, traditional festivals and so on (Tan, 2007).

Conservation imposed from above may contribute to preserving intangible culture, but as living experiences, their specific meanings were subjected to change as a result of the negotiations between various agents. In addition, with the influx of mass tourists, local residents' routine life became a target of the tourist gaze that might eventually lead to the phenomenon conceptualized as "staged authenticity", which refers to the practice that local residents construct and perform a type of authenticity on the stage specifically for tourists' consumption.

¹³<http://www.confucianism.com.cn/html/A00030007/16651294.html> retrieved on July 10, 2012

¹⁴<http://www.kaipingdiaolou.com/old/admin/gonggaoview.asp?id=85> retrieve on July 8, 2012

Chapter 8

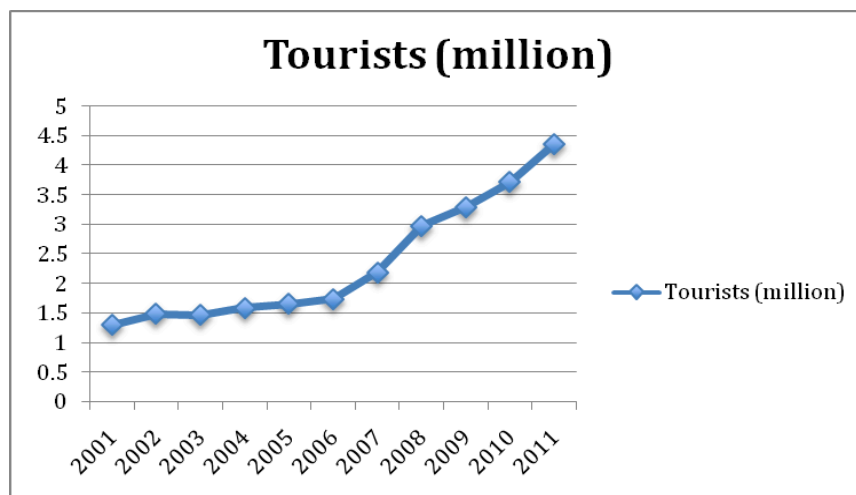
Tourism Development in Kaiping

The history of tourism development could be traced back to 1983 when *Kaiping* government carried out an audit on diaolou and started to protect them as cultural relics (Ryan, Zhang and Deng, 2012). In the eleventh five-year plan, *Kaiping* drew up a plan to further develop tourism and established it as a backbone of local economy. In the twelfth five-year plan, the government reiterated the importance of tourism development. The blueprint revolved around diaolou and *qiaoxiang* and planned to establish a comprehensive service system combining sightseeing, eating, accommodation, entertainment and shopping.¹⁵

When diaolou was elevated to the status of national relics in 2001, *Kaiping* started to receive mass tourists. In 2001, 1.3 million tourists visited *Kaiping* and brought about a total revenue of 48 million RMB. In 2004, *Zilicun* was opened to tourists. In 2007, *Majianglong* village started to receive tourists. Further development of tourism occurred in 2007 when diaolou achieved the accreditation status of world heritage from UNESCO. Chart one displayed the sharp increase of tourists since 2007. In 2011, *Kaiping* attracted 4.36 million tourists and earned the total revenue of 2.68 billion RMB. Domestic tourists accounted for 85.4 percent and foreign tourists accounted for 14.6 percent.

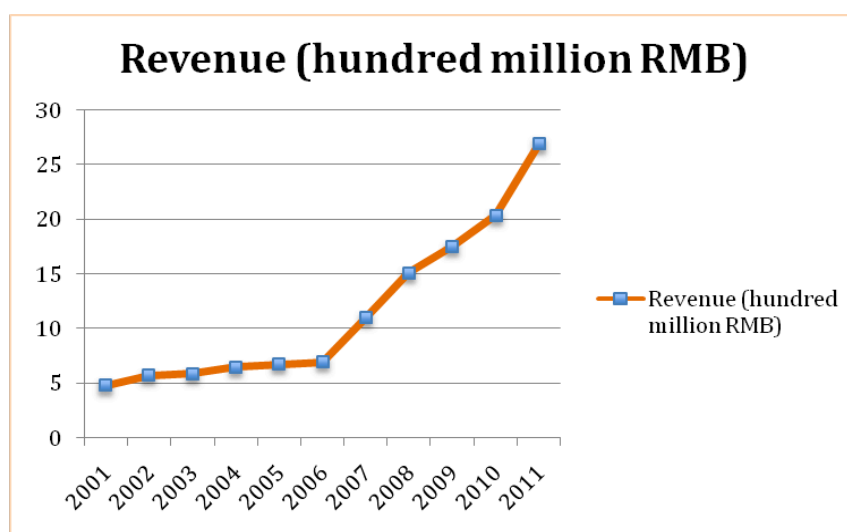
¹⁵<http://tangkou.kaiping.gov.cn/Article/ShowInfo.asp?InfoID=25> retrieved on July 6, 2012

Chart 1: The Number of Tourists Visiting Kaiping (2001-2011)



Source: Kaiping Statistical Information Net (<http://kptj.kaiping.gov.cn/>)

Chart 2: Tourism Revenue in Kaiping (2001-2011)



Source: Kaiping Statistical Information Net (<http://kptj.kaiping.gov.cn/>)

In 2010, Guangdong Kaiping Diaolou Tourist Development Limited Company was established. It is a state owned enterprise and took charge of diaolou and tourism development today. All the major Diaolou clusters including Li garden, *Zilicun*, *Majianglong* village, *Jinjiangli* village, *Sanmenli* village, *Chikan* film town, *Nanlou* and *Kaiyuan* tower were run by this company. It had the right to collect income from ticket sale, in charge of tourist sites, run souvenir shops, carry out landscaping project

and so on.

Villagers' interest was guaranteed under a state-private partnership. Ten percent of the ticket revenue was distributed to villagers and villagers were allowed to sell souvenirs or run small restaurants in designated place while the state company employed the villagers as security guards or sanitation workers (Tan, 2007).

Photo 29: Villagers Selling Local Specialties



Photo 30: Stands In Front of Main Entrance to Li Garden



Despite the dramatic growth in recent years, *Kaiping's* tourism development was still at the embryonic stage. Besides diaolou, there were almost no other tourist attractions in *Kaiping* and the planned resorts and other facilities have not yet been constructed. Many diaolou remained vacant buildings that were not opened to tourists. In *Jinjiangli* village, unlike other diaolou, the famous *Ruishilou* was not entrusted to the tourist company but run by diaolou owners who established the rights to collect ticket sales from the tourists. Several companies and businessmen showed interests in diaolou as they foresee potential commercial value in the buildings. For example, businessman *Zhao Tai* was interested in converting the famous Paris Hotel (巴黎大饭店) into a personal museum to attract more tourists, but the project was deterred by the local authority due to its violation of conservation regulations.

The key consideration faced by the *Kaiping* government was the need to balance cultural conservation and market interests and to ensure its sustainability as it sought to develop the tourism industry.

Generally, local villagers welcomed the changes associated with tourism development. In a research carried out in 2009, Ryan et al found that local villagers experienced dramatic improvement in their daily life brought about by tourism development. The perceived improvement included “the improvement in the roads and placing the pipes and wires underground”, “the free renovation of his house”, “good living environment”, higher income, bring life to village and so on (Ryan et al, 2012:756). Being listed as World Heritage by UNESCO brought pride and psychological satisfaction to local residents. “In short, there was a widespread recognition that the improvements were due to the diaolou, there was pride that their village possessed such towers and it had recognition”. Villagers had such positive attitudes and now regarded diaolou as an asset that could bring about income to raise their quality of life (Ryan et al, 2012:757).

The tourism development further contributed to shifting the local economic activity from farming to production and commerce. Despite efforts to preserve the agricultural culture, farmland has shrunk as the government appropriated land for tourism development. Local government in *Zilicun* purchased 42,492 acre of land for tourism development. In Li Garden, the land was sold at the rate 6070 RMB per acre (Ryan, et al, 2012). Due to the rising economic opportunities associated with the influx of tourists, villagers were more willing to engage in tourism related economic activities such as producing souvenirs, selling local specialties or seeking employment in tourist companies. Villagers tended to shun the arduous farming work. Some villagers employed others to farm the land while they engaged in tourism related business. They could employ others at 45 RMB per day to farm the land (Ryan et al, 2012).

The shift from farming to production and business indicated a change of lifestyle. As Fei argued that due to the long hours of toiling in land, peasants have developed an affective tie with the land and soil (Fei, 1980). Employing others to farm the land severed such emotional ties. However, in *Kaiping*, this change was not new as in the 19th C, remittances from overseas Chinese had been used to employ others for farming. Tourism development only reinforced this trend. However from another perspective, the influx of mass tourists led to the villagers taking a renewed interest in diaolou and led them to reevaluate their traditional lifestyles and culture (Ryan et al, 2012).

Chapter 9

Conclusion: Kaiping as a Multidimensional Social Space

Kaiping Dialou proves itself to be a multidimensional social space that is imbued with history, emotion, identity and is a site of power struggle between different agents ranging from state, overseas Chinese, local residents, tourists and businessmen. The dominant feature of space shifts over time as a result of interactions between different agents and changed social relationships it contains.

Kaiping was once primarily a lineage space that expressed and reinforced lineage structure. The space might have two layers. First, there was inter-lineage social space that articulated a set of relationship. Take *Chikan* as an example, members of Situ and Guan lineages avoided establishing close intimate relationship with each other, and the two lineages fought and competed with each other for economic resource and dominance. As a result, the entire space of *Chikan* was divided into two parts along the street. Second, there was the intra-lineage space that reflected the hierarchical structure of a lineage. The centre of lineages and big segments might be located in town, while lower level *fangs* were situated in the rural villages. They were hierarchically united to form a lineage. With the dominance of lineages, the official administrative units were built based on lineage segments rather than across it.

However, the penetration of CCP has changed the contour of this space. It dissolved the village lineage arrangement and molded *Kaiping* into officially recognized administrative units where the government had the overarching power over cultural, social and economic affairs. This transformation was associated with the remaking of spatial boundary and the residential pattern that cut across the previous lineage segments and mix members from different *fangs* and lineages. In the Maoist era, social relationships were organized along the line of class that cut across the hierarchical structure of lineages. Perceiving overseas Chinese in capitalist

countries as potential enemies, the government was suspicious of them and their dependents. During the Maoist era, contacting overseas relatives was politically dangerous. As a consequence, the overseas Chinese connection with *Kaiping* was almost severed, which further weakened the power of the lineages.

Kaiping was also a religious space where rituals such as ancestor worship and *kaideng* ceremony were held periodically, which contributed to reinforcing the unity of the lineages. In the aforementioned cases, ancestor worship had a clear spatial dimension as Chinese religious orthopraxy dictated it be held at original space where the ancestors had sunk their roots, that is, *Kaiping*. Thus, overseas Chinese had to return to *Kaiping* to conduct ancestor worship. In this sense, the specific locality of *Kaiping* represented one's family origin and roots.

To the first generation of overseas Chinese, *Kaiping* was an emotional space imbued with nostalgic feelings towards China and their local, ethnic and national identity. Thus, supporting the construction of diaolou signified the embodiment of emotional, economic and cultural connection of the migrants to their hometown in *Kaiping*. Their financial support on China's independence and revolutionary movements could be regarded as a practice of long distance nationalism.

Since the early 1980s, with the adoption of liberal social, economic and political policies, the relationships between the state, overseas Chinese and lineages have changed. The Chinese from the various overseas communities, particularly in North America, returned to their ancestral home in search of cultural roots and identity. As a space imbued with history and memory, *Kaiping* embodied the transnational linkages of the Chinese overseas, along with the uncovering of their family and lineage roots. At the same time, the *Kaiping* government capitalized on such history and memory to develop moral economy and encouraged the Chinese overseas to return and support village development. Interested in rebuilding lineage rituals to assert their identity and cultural roots, overseas Chinese use their economic power to bargain with the local

government for cultural and religious rights. As a result, the long banned *kaideng* ceremony was revived and some family tombs were rebuilt or renovated in *Kaiping*. Today, *Kaiping* has thus become socio-economic, ethnic and cultural spaces where intersection between the government, lineages and overseas Chinese takes place.

Kaiping was also a cultural and heritage space. The government-led conservation programmes conducted in accordance with the UNESCO guidelines contributed in shaping *Kaiping* as a historical cultural rural space, which contrasted vividly with the highly industrialized regions of the *Guangdong* province. Conservation projects have restored diaolou's original outlook and the only factory in the core zone was relocated to create a rural rustic landscape. Here, local people were encouraged to engage in planting and fishing. As an intangible cultural heritage, local lifestyle was considered as integral to the landscape.

It was also a tourist space. The influx of mass tourist had a deep impact on the structure of social relationships in *Kaiping*. The influx of mass tourists and the need to regulate the tourism industry legitimated the presence of the tourist company, which acted on behalf of the local authority to discipline and control the local people's use of space. Local residents benefitted from tourism development by seeking employment in tourist companies or running small business, which provided them with an alternative means of livelihood other than planting or fishing. However, as the local lifestyle became part of the cultural landscape, their routine life was subjected to tourists' gaze, which may disturb them or lend them a lens to reexamine their lost traditions and culture as a result of radical communist movement and rapid economic modernization.

All in all, *Kaiping* could be seen as a multiple social space, defined and shaped by the structures of relationships between the different agents including the local government, lineages, local residents, overseas Chinese and tourists in different social, historical and political contexts.

Questions

1. What is tangible and intangible heritage of diaolou?
2. What are the economic, social and cultural capitals of diaolou?
3. In what ways the state and UNESCO contribute to conserving diaolou as tangible or intangible heritage?
4. How the tourism development affects the conservation of diaolou?
5. Do you think diaolou has been commercialized? How the commercialization influences the conservation of diaolou?
6. How the transnational connection and overseas Chinese contribute to shaping diaolou as a cultural heritage?

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